

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 394 544

JC 960 279

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TITLE Transformational Leaders: Meeting the Challenges of a Changing Society.  
PUB DATE Feb 96  
NOTE 13p.; In: The Olympics of Leadership: Overcoming Obstacles, Balancing Skills, Taking Risks. Proceedings of the Annual International Conference of the National Community College Chair Academy (5th, Phoenix, AZ, February 14-17, 1996); see JC 960 276.  
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)  
EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.  
DESCRIPTORS \*Administrative Principles; \*Change Strategies; Educational Change; Intergroup Relations; \*Leadership Qualities; Leadership Responsibility; \*Leadership Styles; \*Organizational Development; \*Social Networks

## ABSTRACT

Transactional leadership, or managing a static system of institutional exchanges, was the standard for colleges in an era of expanding markets, apparent never-ending growth, and little competition. Current conditions, however, call for transformational leadership, which involves leaders who create new approaches and relate to people in more intuitive and empathetic ways than more traditional, transactional leaders. Transformational leaders use encouragement, motivation, and example rather than position or authority to foster institutional success. The goals of transformational leaders are the renovation and rehabilitation of an institution, and a critical part of transformational leadership is understanding the complex nature of social networks. These networks fall into one of three types of systems: technical, characterized by work-related informational exchanges; political, consisting of influence exchanges; and cultural, featuring the shared values among institutional members. If these elements are understood, transformational leaders can make the constant adjustments needed to assure the success of institutional changes. Finally, because maintaining social networks provides an opportunity to increase organizational effectiveness, transformational leaders must enhance the networking capability of the organization by making use of physical architecture and space; transferring people from one network to another; creating such temporary systems as task forces to bring groups together; and introducing such management techniques as role analysis, in which individuals define needs and roles and discuss these in groups. (MAB)

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**TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS:****MEETING THE CHALLENGES  
OF A CHANGING SOCIETY**

By

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Paper Presented at the  
Fifth Annual International Conference for  
Community & Technical College Chairs, Deans and Other Organizational Leaders  
February 14 - 17, 1996  
Phoenix/Mesa, Arizona

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BRIEF BIOGRAPHY  
Jacquelyn M. Belcher, President  
DeKalb College

Jacquelyn M. Belcher assumed the presidency of DeKalb College on May 15, 1995. As president of the third-largest college in the University System of Georgia and the state, Belcher provides leadership for four campuses and one center.

Founded in 1964, DeKalb College is a two-year college whose enrollment represents the entire metropolitan Atlanta area. The student body of 36,000 (16,000 credit and 20,000 continuing education) includes international students from 135 countries. The degrees awarded are: Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and Associate of Applied Science.

As past president and senior administrator in three other community colleges, Belcher brings a broad perspective on higher education to her current position. She has a long history of leadership in community colleges, serving five years on the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Board of Directors, including assuming the position of Chair July 1, 1994. Belcher also served on the American Council on Education's (ACE) Board of Directors, including the Executive Committee.

Belcher served on the American Institute of Foreign Studies Board to facilitate International Exchange activities in community colleges. In 1992, she led a U.S. delegation to Japan to explore possibilities for exchange of students and faculty and to explore specific program/curricula for female Japanese students. The following year, she returned to Japan in another delegation to explore the Japanese approach to accreditation of higher education institutions as well as to discuss barriers for American students and faculty study in Japan.

With graduate degrees from the University of Washington and the University of Puget Sound, Belcher served in senior administrators positions as well as CEO in urban, suburban and rural community colleges - namely Bellevue in Washington (1973-84), Lane in Oregon (1984-90) and Minneapolis in Minnesota (1990-95) Community Colleges with student headcounts of 15,000, 32,000 and 12,000 respectively. All are members of AACC.

Between 1966-1984, Belcher held faculty and administrative posts at St. Elizabeth College and Bellevue Community College. She began her academic career at St. Elizabeth College where she rose from instructor of nursing to Dean of Education; at Bellevue Community College she served as division chair and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs.

An author of articles on community college issues, leadership, team building, student access and success, Belcher has been active on national higher education boards, commissions, task forces and committees. She is frequently asked to serve as keynote speaker at local, regional and national meetings. She is married to Lewis Belcher, Jr., a retired business executive.

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**Transformational Leaders:  
Meeting the Challenges of a Changing Society**

Abstract: Leaders in virtually every organization in our society are confronted with the need to re-examine direction; our educational system is no different. It is difficult to find an educational administration today that is not faced with the need to lead and manage some form of transition. Current issues in education demand creative, transformational leadership and the development of innovative strategies to meet the challenges created by a changing society.

As leaders in education we are faced with many problems and challenges. A key challenge today is finding the answer to the question of how we can facilitate our institution's development of leadership. This is an ageless question but one with a new twist. Changes in society and the economy require us to go beyond traditional mechanisms of encouraging promising individuals, managing leadership development programs, and enhancing the existing opportunity structure. Today, we must focus on developing leaders who have the courage and imagination needed to change the very "lifestyle" of their organization. I suggest that what's needed is not traditional transactional leadership, but imaginative transformational leadership.

Transactional leaders were fine for an earlier era of expanding markets, apparently never-ending growth, and little, if any, competition. In return for compliance from subordinates, transactional leaders issued rewards. For all intents and purposes these managers produced little change; they simply managed a static system of "transactions" or exchanges. The expectation was that they would manage what they found and leave things pretty much as they found them when they moved on. With transactional leadership being the standard, it's not surprising that most community colleges across the country found themselves in relative decline after a quarter century of existence.

Transformational leadership, on the other hand, is about change, innovation and entrepreneurship. Transformational leaders do not have unique personality traits requiring that they occupy the provinces of lonely, half-mad

individuals who have flashes of genius. Rather, according to Peter Drucker, these leaders exhibit behavioral styles that are capable of being learned (1985). It is becoming increasingly clear that transformational leadership is a process that is systematic, consisting of a purposeful and organized search for beneficial changes, in-depth analyses of the organization, and, finally, the ability and will to move resources from areas of lesser to greater productivity.

While most of what is written about transformational leadership tends to focus on leaders at the top of an organization, the **real** challenge is to develop transformational leadership at all levels of an organization. As leaders in educational institutions, we must come to the realization that the strategic transformation of organizations is not something that occurs solely through the idiosyncratic behavior of charismatic geniuses at the top of the organization. Rather, transformational leadership must pervade an organization and we must understand that it is a discipline with a set of predictable steps.

According to Zaleznik, transformational leaders are characterized as individuals whose purpose is to create new approaches and imagine new areas to explore (1992). They are leaders who relate to people in more intuitive and empathetic ways than traditional leaders. They understand that the key to leadership is not based on position or authority but on encouragement, motivation, and example. They are also leaders who are willing to take risks when the opportunity for reward is high and they have learned how to project ideas into images that have the capacity to excite people.

Transforming an organization in order to make it strategically competitive is a complex task. It involves the coordination and motivation of people throughout the organization and requires considerable investments of time, energy, and other resources. But the transformational process, and the role of transformational leaders, can be easily understood if placed within the proper context or framework. Tichy and Devann (1990) have defined transformation in terms of a three-act play:

- Act I Revitalization - Recognizing the need for change
- Act II Creating a New Vision - Projecting ideas into images
- Act III Institutionalizing Change - Making the vision real

Once transformational leaders have recognized the need for change and have created a vision which they use to mobilize individuals in the organization, they must turn their attention to the design of new organizational structures and processes in order that the vision be achieved. Transforming an educational organization is not a simple matter of changing individual attitudes and behaviors; it requires far more than that. The

transformational leader must redefine and redesign the social structure of the institution. The roles of individuals, the linkages between groups, and informal and formal networks must be reshaped and reordered. The transformational leader in essence becomes a social architect or a social engineer, using the tools of social relations and knowledge of social structures to design a new organization.

Transformational leaders face a challenging social architectural problem, not of *de nova* institution building, but of major renovation and rehabilitation. In the process of envisioning the new out of the old, the transformational leader must recognize and appreciate the constraints and opportunities presented by the past while adhering to the expected demands of the future. The challenge for transformational leaders is to move from the vision to a viable set of blueprints, describing and defining the new structure so that a long-term, enduring set of behaviors can be made part of the organization.

To continue the architectural metaphor, we are talking about taking an existing building and transforming it in major ways. In the architectural field this might be exemplified by the renovation of an old house, much like what is done on the Public Broadcasting System's "This Old House" a program that depicts the step-by-step processes of renovating older homes. The shape of the "Old" entity limits and constrains, but does not wholly determine what the "New" entity will be like in the future. A key element of transformation, this process of renovation and rehabilitation, is an understanding of the need to be "creatively destructive". In order to create something new, part of the old **must** be destroyed.

### **Technical-Political-Cultural Networks**

We as managers get work done through hundreds of network relationships, most of them informal. Effective managers use chance encounters in the hallways after meetings and during meetings to constantly reinforce their agendas. They engage in playful opportunism around the network. The transformational leader not only uses the network, but must also envision a new and different set of network relationships to get a job done. A critical part of transformational leadership is an understanding of the complex nature of social networks and how they operate. In general, networks fall into one of three types of social systems:

- Technical - The technical, or information, system is largely held together by work-related informational exchanges among members of the organization.
- Political - The political, or influence, system is made up of influence exchanges.

- Cultural - the cultural, or affective, system is held together by exchanges involving shared values among organizational members.

Some authorities suggest that leaders must also be subtle manipulators of the networks in these systems. But in order to qualify as transformational leaders, they must not treat people as pawns. Bludgeoning people and the use of lies are not appropriate tactics for transformational leaders.

All of us are enmeshed in these vast webs of social relationships. These social networks both define who we are (e.g., father, mother, boss), as well as who others are in relation to us (e.g., son, daughter, subordinate). The transformational leader must creatively destroy these networks of relations and then reweave the system of social networks in order to create meaningful change. Because of this need to "destroy", it is not surprising to find that many transformational leaders are outsiders to the organization or new to the job when the transformational process begins. A leader who has been in place for some time will have a much more difficult task in assuming responsibility for revitalizing an organization. Such a leader, typically, is enmeshed in existing networks of friendships, political alliances, and work exchanges, while at the same time trying to envision an organizational structure comprising of different networks, that will more effectively support the organization's future direction. The vision must include a sense of who will work with whom, who cannot get along with whom, and who can adapt to a changed reality and who cannot. Formulating the vision is difficult, but reweaving the social fabric of the organization, breaking old ties between people, and establishing new ones is clearly the more challenging task. It is apparent that this task is accomplished with greater ease by an outsider in this situation.

An especially critical time for understanding the role of social networks in any organization occurs when there is a transition of leadership at the very top of the organization. For example, in a college that shall remain unidentified, when a new president was appointed, observers of the situation remarked about the shift in focus that the change would represent for the college. The former president was perceived as someone who rose through the faculty ranks on the basis of a strong academic background in math and whose focus was primarily internal. As such, he was particularly suited to a period in which the college devoted its energies to getting itself established as a new educational service and developed a strong academic curriculum. On the other hand, the new president was observed to be someone with superb marketing skills and development. His principal focus was external and therefore was viewed as particularly well-equipped for a period in which the college's principal challenge was to maintain its dominant position in quality academic programs and deal with the growing competition facing the college. Because of the shift in the president's vision, from internal to external, major

restructuring occurred in the organization of this college. With increased emphasis on marketing and development, public relations became a powerful functional area in the college and there was less emphasis placed in academic affairs.

From the perspective of the technical-political-cultural (TPC) framework, colleges contemplating a succession at the top must ask not only whether an individual's technical competencies fit the college's strategic challenge of the next decade, but whether the networks in which the individual is enmeshed will play a significant role in his or her ability to execute a given strategy. Some authorities argue that the leader must be able to mobilize a critical mass of the organization to effect a transformation. A leader need not be loved to gain this commitment, but he or she must be respected. While most strong individuals make some enemies in the course of a career, the number of these should be limited, or it will be difficult to accomplish a leadership agenda. A leader needs the ability to tap into networks, because networks are central to getting things done.

It is also through networks that we define much of our self-image or self-esteem and the absence of significant network relationships is often seen as a sign of social maladaptation. People will run adrift without social anchors. The French sociologist Durkheim described the lack of meaningful network ties as *anomie*, or a sense of meaninglessness. Organizations in transition engage in the risky business of creating *anomie* purposely for many of its members. Networks are broken in the hope of forming new ones. A transformational leader must manage to create a new set of social networks with new flows and ties while selectively eliminating old, no longer useful, networks. The implications of social networks on transition management are profound.

Transformational leaders must provide guidance during this macro-level transition. The importance of networks during transition periods has been pointed out by a number of CEOs. Lee Iacocca's sentiment is echoed in the following words:

"The kind of people I look for to fill top management spots are the eager beavers. These are the guys who try to do more than they're expected to. They're always reaching. And reaching out to the people they work with, trying to help them do their jobs *better*. That's the way they're built. So I try to look for people with that drive. You don't need many. With 25 of these guys, I could run the government of the United States. At Chrysler, I have about a dozen. What makes these managers strong is that they know how to delegate and how to motivate. They know how to look for the pressure points and how to set priorities."

It is clear that Iacocca understands the power of networks and the fact that putting the right individuals in the right places will give the transformational leader tremendous leverage on the remainder of the system.

### **Creative Destruction and Reweaving of Social Networks**

The adjustments that take place during transitional periods involve breaking and reforming the information, influence, and affective links in an organization. This process of creative destruction and rebuilding of social networks, the "links" between individuals and groups requires the transformational leader to orchestrate various shifts or movements in the TPC network. The major determinant of changes in informational links are shifts in the task demands of the technical system. The major determinant of changes in influence networks are shifts in the balance of power among coalitions in the organization. Finally, changes in the culture of the organization are most likely to alter affective links. A transitional period involves maintaining certain relationships, creating new relationships, and breaking off some old relationships. To add to the complexity, the pattern of maintaining, breaking, or creating networks varies among the information, influence, and affective networks.

### **Transition Vehicles for Managing Networks**

The most critical part of a trapeze act occurs when one trapeze artist is released by their partner and then flies through the air into the hands of another trapeze artist. The ending, the transition zone, and the new beginning are all well-defined and failure to execute this maneuver properly can have grave results. It is interesting that in a trapeze act the ending - the "take off" - has a tremendous influence on future events. It limits and constrains the arc and the distance that the trapeze artists can fly through the air but does not totally determine it. If the ending is a little bit off, the trapeze artist can change the body rotation, arch the back a little bit, and make some minor adjustments during transition so there can be a successful new beginning. It is clear that all three phases are critical to the success of the act.

The transformational leader is much like a trapeze artist. There is a point at which the break with the past must be made. The past certainly limits and constrains the future, but it does not totally determine the new beginning. Constant adjustments need to be made during the transition so that the links that were broken can be replaced with new ones. The danger is that the transformational leader can throw an organization into ambiguity, uncertainty, and chaos if he or she doesn't make the adjustments needed to reweave the social fabric and create a new beginning. It is precisely during this transition period that the greatest network demands are made on the transformational

leader. People are not clear where to get critical information. The norms and values are not totally clear. Friendships often get broken. Jim Renier, CEO of Honeywell, spoke about this process during a transition period at Honeywell:

"At some point you've got to loosen the reins, delegate. You've got to get the whole organization to practice this, to get you there. At the moment we have painted a picture that is not as clear in its details as I would like. It's almost like being in a battlefield in a fog. It's too much to ask the commander to describe the terrain as if the fog wasn't there. I don't have all the answers, but we've got to be willing to listen and say, well, someone else has seen through part of the fog so we'd better listen carefully to that person."

Given the nature of the transitional task, the most central problem is political uncertainty. When political uncertainty is high it becomes the major focal point for people's energy, because it is most directly and fundamentally linked to the survival of individuals in the organization. The ultimate political act in an organization is the decision about who will stay and who will go. Thus one of the most salient points to keep in mind is that when political uncertainty is high, transformational leaders will find it virtually impossible to work on technical or cultural issues, even though they may need attention. Something must be done to reduce the political uncertainty first.

### Some Prescriptions

The world is, of course, complex. Relationships among people are not just technical, political, or cultural. Usually there is some mixture of all three. To plan for a transition, however, we will argue that it is useful to pull these three apart analytically, so that we can be very clear about the technical information flows between people that are needed and what changes are required. We also want to be clear about the political influence flows and the effective cultural flows that go on in the organization. Transformational leaders must use a variety of tools to analyze these flows.

The technical plan should be based on a work flow analysis that identifies who needs what information from whom at what point in the process to get the job done. Work units should be clustered to get groups together who need to interact most frequently and then provide integrative network vehicles such as liaisons, matrix structures, or other ways of coordinating the work between groups.

In the political arena, it is important to identify the following elements:

1. Individuals and groups whose commitment is needed for

- the change to happen.
2. The definition of the critical mass needed to ensure the effective implementation of the change.
3. A plan for getting the commitment from a critical mass of employees.
4. A monitoring system to track changes in the political system.

The first step is to do an analysis of key influential people to determine their current attitudes toward the desired change. Then determine where they need to be in order to carry out the transition successfully. It should be noted that in order to change an individual politically, it is important to assess the networks in which that individual operates, since it may be easier to effect change by working through other people.

Cultural transitions demand that we deal with some of the most elusive elements of the transition process, for it is in the cultural system that we find people's beliefs, values, and norms. These generally cannot be changed directly, they must be worked on over long periods of time in redundant ways. However, the leader who wants to change the culture in the organization should start with a network analysis that includes:

1. Identifying the cultural values and beliefs that require changing.
2. Identifying the gatekeepers of the organization's current culture, that is, who are the most important guardians of the norms and values, and whose support will be most critical for the new culture to succeed.
3. Defining the critical mass of cultural gatekeepers needed to change the culture.
4. Developing a monitoring system to support the change process.

In this analysis, it is important to identify those elements of the culture that need to be maintained, those that should be eliminated, and those that should be introduced. Then a specific plan is needed to build links to the gatekeepers to change their values and beliefs.

### Loosely Coupling the Networks that Manage Transition

The TPC networks are often worked simultaneously by the transformational leader. A single event could contain a technical message, a political message, and a cultural message. The important point for the transformational leader is that he or she has some understanding of how these agendas are working. Furthermore, networks, perhaps more than any other aspect of the organization, are worked through playful opportunism.

With a vision and an agenda, a chance encounter can be used to reinforce an important value or to give a political message.

But this playful opportunism can be enhanced. For example, Hewlett-Packard's well-known management technique "MBWA" (management by walking around), is an illustration of how the transformational leader engages in a constant working of social networks. As educational leaders we must allocate a certain amount of time out on the campus interacting with faculty. At Hewlett-Packard "MBWA" was initiated and continues to be done essentially for cultural reasons. Nevertheless, the MBWA strategy allows the technical and political networks to be continually massaged at the same time.

Because maintaining networks clearly provides an opportunity to increase organizational effectiveness, the transformational leader must enhance the networking capability of the organization. This is accomplished by:

1. Utilizing physical architecture and physical space as important network tools. The architecture controls the flow of traffic and increases the probability of meeting among people. Where people are placed and traffic flows, as well as the location of offices and conference rooms, are important vehicles for network management.
2. Transferring people from one network to another. A multinational corporation used movement of key executives around the world as an organization design tool to build and maintain global networks
3. Creating temporary systems such as task forces or collateral organizations that bring together groups to work on new tasks. In the process, new alliances and new networks are formed.
4. And, finally, introducing new management practices designed to help the organization develop new network ties. One such tool is the role analysis technique which specifically focuses on role sets. Individuals define their job and what they need from others in their role set and conduct negotiation sessions in which the members and the role set agree to exchanges to facilitate the work. This makes the linkages in their network explicit.

It is up to the transformational leader first to understand social networks, and then to do a diagnosis of the current and desired state, and finally to call on the multiple set of tools needed to execute the difficult trapeze act of letting go and reaching the new beginning by breaking old ties and constructively building new ones.

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